

## TALKING POINTS – West Lake Landfill ASPECT Report – 5/29/13

- As you know, back on March 8, at the request of EPA Region 7, an aerial survey of the West Lake Landfill Site in Bridgeton was conducted. The main objective of this survey was to identify surface areas at this Superfund site that emit gamma radiation.
- Today, after a thorough and careful analysis of the data, we can announce that the survey has shown that radiological-contaminated wastes that were buried at the site in the 1970s remain contained within secure, fenced areas, and do not pose health risks to the public.
- Let me reiterate: The results of the survey in March 2013 are consistent with previous studies from 1994 and 1995 that indicate the site's radiological wastes are contained inside Operable Unit 1 at the site.
- Because the entire site, including Operable Unit 1, is securely fenced and marked with warning signs, this means that a person would have to illegally trespass onto the site—which we do not recommend—to risk being exposed to elevated levels of radiation.
- **WHY DID EPA DO THIS SURVEY?** Region 7 requested this survey to gather current data to help inform our future decisions at the site. We wanted to know if there had been any change to the location of the contaminated material. This is part of our continuing work to update information collected through prior investigations at the site.
- **WHO CONDUCTED THIS SURVEY?** Region 7 turned to our colleagues at the ASPECT program. That's an acronym for the Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology program. Based in Dallas, this agency resource is used by EPA on a variety of missions all across the country, ranging from the Deepwater Horizon spill to the Super Bowl to the Presidential Inauguration.
- **WHAT IS ASPECT?** Essentially, it's EPA's flying science lab. The ASPECT plane is a small aircraft, staffed with a pilot and co-pilot and technician, and fitted with a variety of scientific sensors and other equipment, that can efficiently and accurately perform a range of environmental sampling from the air.
- **WHY DID REGION 7 USE ASPECT?** Our previous radiation surveys at the West Lake Landfill Site—those done in 1994 and 1995—used ground-

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based detection equipment. After 18 years, significant portions of the site have been overgrown with small trees and heavy vegetation that would have made ground-based surveys difficult, if not impossible, to attempt. We could have gone in with earthmoving equipment and cleared the ground in those areas, but not without significant costs added to the project, and not without the added risk of disturbing areas where contamination exists. So instead, we chose to use ASPECT.

- **WHAT WILL EPA DO WITH THIS NEW DATA?** Those of you who've been following our work at this site will recall that about a year ago, EPA's National Remedy Review Board—the NRRB—suggested that we gather some additional environmental data, and conduct some additional analysis of potential remedies for this site. This data gathering is a part of that ongoing process.
- **WHAT OTHER DATA IS BEING CONSIDERED?** The Potentially Responsible Parties, or PRPs, at this site, have been tasked to do four rounds of groundwater sampling. That's four seasonal rounds, to account for possible changes in how groundwater may be affected at different times of the year. The first round was completed, and those results were made public in January. The second round of sampling is currently under analysis, and we expect the results in late June. The third and fourth seasonal rounds will be done later this year, and should be wrapped up by the end of 2013.
- **WHY DID THE ASPECT REPORT TAKE ALMOST THREE MONTHS TO RELEASE?** EPA Region 7 understands the public's interest in this site. We appreciate the desire for information like this to be made available as quickly as possible. But we are also committed to ensuring the accuracy of the data and the integrity of the science that we use to interpret it. If you take a close look at the 31-page report, which is available online, you will see the level of detail involved in a survey of this kind. These reports take time.
- **WHY DID THE SURVEY LOOK ONLY FOR GAMMA RADIATION, AND NOT ALPHA OR BETA RADIATION?** Alpha and beta scans were not conducted by the ASPECT airplane because alpha and beta particles cannot travel very far in air. Alpha particles may travel a few inches in air, while beta particles may travel a few feet in air. These particles cannot travel far enough to reach the ASPECT airplane's sensors.

Since alpha and beta particles cannot travel very far in air, emissions of these particles from soil at the surface of the West Lake Landfill OU1 cells pose no risk to people living around the site. (The closest residence to the affected OU1 cell is approximately one-half mile away.) Gamma rays from the surface of the West Lake Landfill OU1 cells provide indirect evidence for the alpha and beta decays occurring in surface soil in those cells.

- **WAS GROUND RADIATION THE ONLY DATA GATHERED IN THE WEST LAKE OVERFLIGHT?** No. As you'll see in the report, Region 7 requested the ASPECT team to collect infrared imagery, in an effort to assist our partners at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, who are managing issues related to a subsurface smouldering event and odors at the Bridgeton Sanitary Landfill portion of the site.
- **WHAT DID THE INFRARED SURVEY SHOW?** Our hope was that the infrared survey might help reveal heat signatures from the underground smouldering so that its location could be more precisely identified, but ultimately, the data did not show any surface temperature differences that could be attributed to the smouldering. We went ahead and included these findings in the report, and we have shared them with MDNR.
- **WHAT IS EPA DOING ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND SMOULDERING EVENT?** For months now, EPA Region 7 has been in close, regular contact with MDNR representatives to maintain awareness of the work being done at Bridgeton Sanitary Landfill in regard to the underground smouldering event. Region 7 also is in contact with experts at national and EPA headquarters level in regard to the situation and further contingencies for protecting the radiological-contaminated wastes from the smouldering.
- **WHAT ELSE IS EPA DOING NEXT?** As mentioned, results from the second seasonal round of groundwater sampling should be ready by late June, and we are continuing to work with our state partners to support their efforts, and to oversee the actions of the PRPs. We are also announcing today that EPA will hold a public meeting next month to discuss the ASPECT survey, the next round of groundwater sampling, and future steps in our ongoing work.
- **WHEN AND WHERE WILL THE PUBLIC MEETING BE HELD?**

The meeting will be from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 25, in the auditorium at Pattonville High School, 2497 Creve Coeur Mill Road, in Maryland Heights. We urge you and the public to come to this meeting.

OPEN SESSION TO QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS